DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 276 689 SP 028 195

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TITLE Black Teachers: Finding Them, Getting Them, Keeping Them.
PUB DATE Oct 86
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the National Invitational Conference on Preparation and Survival of Black Public School Teachers (7th, Norfolk, VA, October 9-10, 1986).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Program Improvement; Public Relations; *Schools of Education; *Teacher Persistence; *Teacher Recruitment
IDENTIFIERS University of Florida

ABSTRACT

The retainment of black teachers is a process that must be undertaken by a variety of people, including inservice teachers, churches, and parents who can work together to increase the number of black students who select education as a career. Strategies used by the University of Florida's College of Education to increase black student enrollment and persistence in the education field include: (1) organizing an Office of Recruitment and Outreach; (2) contacting various fraternities, sororities, clubs, and church organizations and requesting their assistance in getting students interested in education; (3) contacting appropriate educators at community colleges and high schools who can help identify students interested in enrolling in the College of Education and assist them with meeting requirements; (4) conducting follow-up activities for non-education majors who come for tutorial assistance; and (6) organizing Future Educators of America clubs at various universities, colleges, and secondary schools. Efforts are now being made to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies and to help black teacher education students remain in the program and complete all requirements for certification. (CB)

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BLACK TEACHERS:

Finding Them, Getting Them, Keeping Them

A Presentation Made to Conference on Preparation and Survival of Black Public School Teachers

Norfolk State University

Norfolk, Virginia

October 9-10, 1986

By

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BLACK TEACHERS:
FINDING THEM, GETTING THEM, KEEPING THEM

As one looks at the number of black teachers who are presently employed; the number of black pre-service students; or the number of high school students who expressed a desire to become teachers, the future looks bleak for maintaining black public school teachers. The problem becomes greater when one can observe the large numbers of whites who are entering, or re-entering, the teaching profession. The questions is: Why are they entering the teaching profession if conditions are to bad? The next crucial fact is there will be very few blacks to serve as role models in the profession. In spite of reasons like low salaries, working conditions, other opportunities and a lack of status, blacks must continue to prepare themselves to become teachers. Reed (1986) believes that the most critical problem in education today is the precipitious decline in the number of talented young black people who are entering the teaching profession.

The major purpose for this presentation is to outline strategies that have been implemented at the University of Florida, College of Education, in order to identify, recruit, retain, and graduate black students. It is important to emphasize that each college in the University of Florida has plans for the recruitment of black students. This report will describe those procedures that have been developed by the College of Education for increasing the number of black teachers

in public schools.

THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

The College of Education is housed in Norman Hall which is located on the east point of the campus. There are 1442 students enrolled in five departments. Of this number there are 406 undergraduates and 248 Post Baccalaureate, 369 Masters, 208 Specialists, and 248 Doctoral students. Of the 406 undergraduates approximately 32 are black and of the 1036 graduate students approximately 88 are black.

In August, 1984, the College of Education instituted a new program entitled, PROTEACH (Professional Teacher Program). This program requires five years of study and culminates in the Masters's degree. The program combines in-depth study of an academic specialization with the study of professional education. The entry requirement at the Junior level consists of a minimum SAT score of 850 or a minimum ACT score of 18. Plus, the student's grade point average must be 2.6 or above. The exited requirement for the Master's degree is 1000 on the Graduate Record Eximination (GRE) and a grade point average (GPA) of "B" or better. With the high requirements for entering and leaving the program it is necessary for strong efforts in the recruitment and retention areas be made. This is especially true when the efforts are designed to increase the enrollment of back students.

RECRUITMENT

Based upon the above requirements it is important to recruit students who have potential for success. Consequently, recruitment is a combined effort by many people in the College.

The effort is through an organized program that is coordinated by Dr. Simon Johnson, Professor, and Director of the Office of Recruitment and Outreach. Basically, the following strategies were employed in order to recruit students who will become successful.

The first strategy was to organize the Office of Recruitment and Outreach. This office, organized in 1985, is responsible for recruiting, retaining, and assisting students to graduate. The director has the responsibility for coordinating efforts for the recruitment of students. Within this office a committee entitled Recruitment of Students has been organized. One representative from each department and the Associate Dean of the College are members. The major functions of this committee are advisory to the director, assist in recruitment, and retention, and to represent their department.

The second strategy was to contact the various fraternities, sororities, clubs, and church organizations and request their assistance in getting students interested in education. This effort required much time to be spent in the evenings and weekends in order to work with many students. However, it has proven worthy of the time spent because many of the students are following through on the plans made.

The third strategy was to contact the appropriate educators at community colleges and high schools in order to identify students who might be interested in enrolling in the College. The major purpose for this strategy was to identify interested students, inform them of the procedure for applying for admission, work with them on test-taking skills, and assist them

in getting prepared to meet the requirements for admission.

The fourth strategy was to conduct follow-up activities for those non-education majors who came for tutorial assistance. Some of these students were undecided as to their field of interest; therefore, they were asked to consider some phase of education as their major area of concentration. These students were usually freshmen or sophmores and were making attempts to enroll in an upper division college.

The fifth strategy was to attend several local, State of Florida, and regional conferences and organize displays. These displays were to be attractive in design and must emphasize the academic, social, and athletic activities of the college. When possible, students were invited to attend the conferences and to assist with the display and the handing out of brochures.

The sixth strategy was to organize Future Educators of America Clubs at the various universities, (public and private) community colleges, and secondary schools. In addition, the plan was to hold a statewide conference in order to further encourage students to enter the teaching profession. During the conference students were given information concerning scholarships, loans, requirements, and procedures. Plus, efforts were made to encourage students to think about teaching as a profession.

There were several other methods employed in order to identify students who might wish to become teachers. However, the ones stated above were the most successful. In the future a complete evaluation of the strategies employed will be made and the necessary improvements will be implemented.

RETENTION

Once students are identified and encouraged to enroll at the University, every effort is made to assist them to become successful. In other words, it is as important to develop strategies for the retention of students as it is to identify and recruit them. Some students find it very difficult to make the adjustment from home to a campus where there are about 35,000 students, or classes where there are 500 or more students. Therefore, it becomes necessary to follow-up the students once they are enrolled. Consequently, the Office of Recruitment and Outreach assists the students in the following areas:

- assistance with current class assignment,
- tutorial assistance in mathematics, language arts, reading and science,
- techniques for taking standardized tests (College of Education Basic Skills Test), SAT, Teacher Certification Examination, etc.,
- general survival skills,
- establishing communications when students believe they have problems with professors, and
- establishing communications when professors find it difficult to work with some students.

On some occasions students have a need to sit and talk with someone. Throughout the day there are several teaching assistants on duty to aid students with this problem. The assistants are trained to work with students (affectively or cognitively) and they understand that all information is

confidential.

The retention of students is a matter that must be undertaken by everyone. Simms (1986) writing about the success of a National Teachers Examination (NTE) Program at Grambling University stated: "We've had a group of people who were very committed - they wanted to make a difference." This statement is true for many of the administrators and professors at the College of Education. . .they want black students to succeed.

KEEP THEM TEACHING

In the State of Florida, the graduating from a college or university is one step in the certification process. Upon the completion of the requirements for graduation the student must:

1. Pass the Florida Teacher Competency Examination. This examination has four sub-tests: writing, mathematics, reading, and the professional area. In order to keep black teachers in the profession, they must pass this examination. Consequently, the Office of Recruitment and Outreach has developed workshops in order to help students. The sessions are usually held on Saturday or after the school day. These sessions are important because the first time passing percentage for blacks in the State of Florida is approximately 40%.

2. Successfully complete the Florida Beginning Teacher Program. This program is completed during the first year of employment. It is a very crucial and a very helpful program because young educators are being assisted by peers. Before students graduate they are aware of the program, understand concepts, and know the strategies to employ in order to succeed.

CONCLUSION

The retainment of black teachers is a process that must be undertaken by a variety of people. For example, inservice teachers, college and university professors, business persons, civic organizations, churches, and parents must work to increase the number of students who select education as a career. In addition these organizations must develop strategies to maintain the teachers who are presently employed. It appears that the first step to take is for leaders in these groups to realize there is a problem and to articulate this realization to their members.

The Education Standards Commission of Florida conducted a study concerning the perceptions of high school students' concerning teachers and teaching (1985). One student stated: "Pretty soon teaching will be a job that a person will get as a last resort because of the salary." I am sure this student voiced the sentiment of many persons concerning the responsibilities of a teacher and the salaries paid. However, this writer feels that there are persons who wish to become teachers in spite of the salaries. He further feels that it is the responsibility of these in the field to serve as role models and to encourage others to consider teaching as a career. In order to increase the number of black teachers in the profession the following suggestions are made.

1. Those persons who are presently teaching stop speaking negatively about the profession.

2. Interested persons in public schools, community colleges and universities organize teaching clubs. These clubs should begin in the middle junior high school and continue through the

university level. The major purpose should be to encourage students to think about teaching as a career at an early age.

3. Continue to work to increase the salaries of teachers. This could mean that teachers must join others in becoming more political in order to influence those who appropriate money for education.

4. Work with institutions of higher learning in an effort to find additional scholarship funds for worthy students.

5. Provide appropriate inservice training for those persons presently employed. (Care should be taken to make sure that no one is embarrassed.)

6. Assist preservice and inservice teachers to pass various competency tests.

These suggestions and this paper are examples of strategies that can be employed in order to increase the number of black teachers in the school systems. This writer is aware that there are many other strategies that have proven successful in reaching the stated objective. The next step is to combine efforts and find the correct procedures for identifying, recruiting, retaining, and graduating black students. This means that someone in each state, county, district, community, and school must coordinate efforts to solve the problem. At the University of Florida, College of Education the Office of Recruitment and Outreach has the responsibility for coordinating these efforts. The major question is: What have you done in order to increase the number of black teachers in the profession?

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